

Dek Unu Magazine

Solo Exhibitions of Fine
Photoart Portfolios

June, 2018

Featured Artist
Ian Sanderson
"Hand Made"

Cover Image: Vienna
© Ian Sanderson



Artist Interview - Ian Sanderson

Welcome, Ian. Yours has been a long and winding road.

I left Glasgow at 18, in 1969, to study Fine Art at Sunderland University. After graduation, I spent a couple of years at manual labor before 1975, when I found work in a silkscreen shop, specialising in printing onto glass. From 1978 to 1980, I worked as a photographer in the conservation department for the Newcastle-upon-Tyne group of museums...disciplined work, developing real technical skills.

After a move to Brighton and a one-year post-grad in Art Education, I taught Visual Art in a closed unit for young criminals. I was also given a full-time position as a lecturer at Northbrook College, teaching drawing and photography. I stayed in England and at Northbrook through 1990. While teaching, I began to pick up work from publishers and magazines and decided to leave my college position and to work freelance. At just the same time, the UK economy went into recession and, in the serious financial crash, I lost most of my clients and my apartment! I took a chance, moved to rural France, where accommodation was very cheap, and tried to rebuild my career.

In 1993, a well-paid catalogue job allowed me to buy a computer and a copy of *Photoshop* which looked to be the future of commercial photography. It took a while, but working with the *Photoshop* manual, I became very proficient and, by 1995, I was finding commercial work using the new technology. Since then, my list of commercial clients has included General Motors, Subaru, Alfa Romeo, Coca Cola, and an assortment of corporate and financial organisations.

In 2009, an assignment from the *Financial Times* in London to photograph the jewelry designer and philanthropist, Elsa Peretti, resulted in a collaboration with her which continues to the present day.

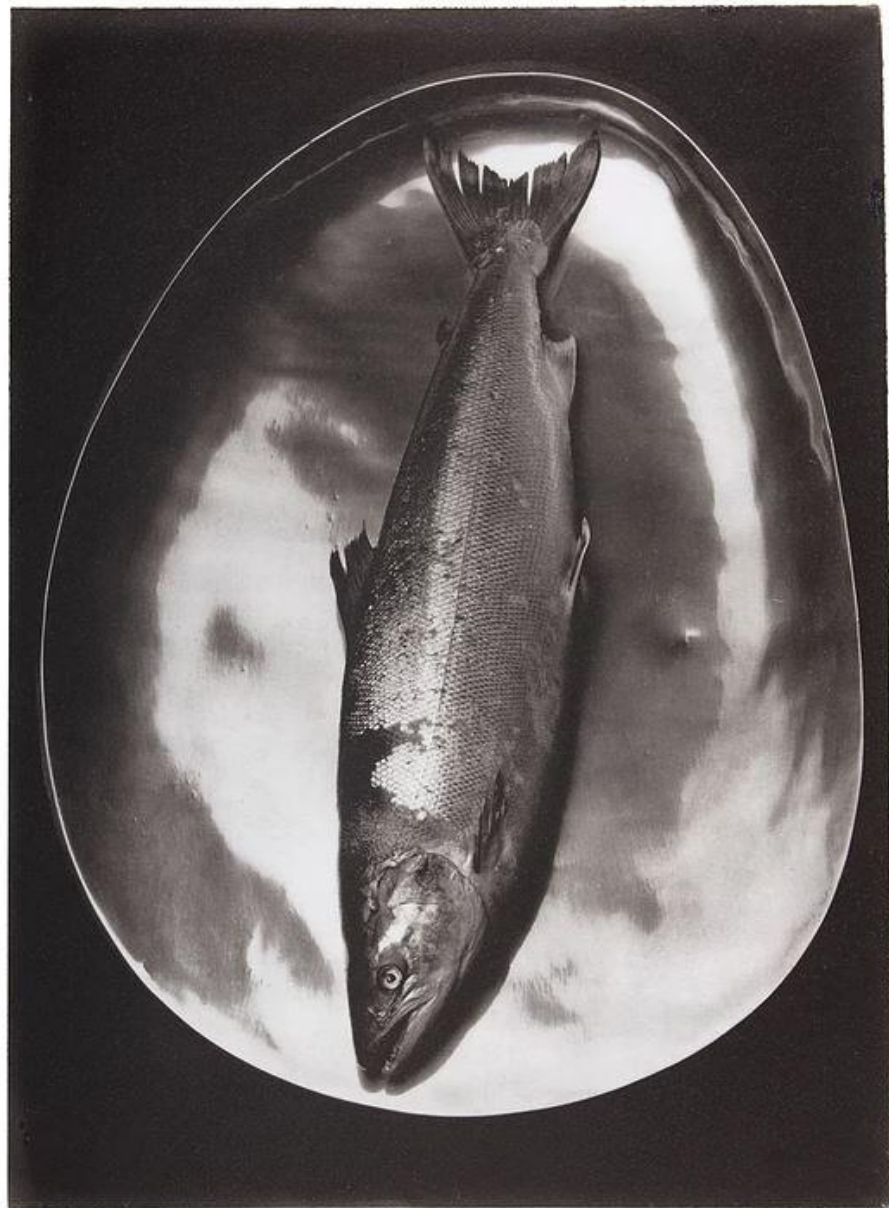
You are one among very few who work on vellum backed with gold or silver foil. The effect is mesmerizing. How do you do it?

The process is quite simple; the vellum is coated with platinum, palladium, and ferric oxalate solution. I use a glass topped dry-mounting press to expose the paper in contact with a large, digitally-created internegative. Vellum is tricky when it is wet so the process is very artisanal - lots of trial and error. The metal backing shows through the vellum giving the print a unique color and luminosity.

I use digital negatives and large format negs from 10 x 8, 5 x 7, and 5 x 4 cameras. Back in the dark ages, I used Lith Film for my internegs, but now I print them using a large inkjet printer, a gift from Epson France in return for a print that they display in their Paris office. The chemicals for platinum/palladium printing are very expensive; less than half an eyedropper bottle costs around \$300. It can get depressing when the print ends up in the trash after hours of work.

There is a lot of interest in film and alt-process photography these days. What led you back to "long form" photoart?

Up until 2002, I was still shooting film so the transition was gradual. Film is horrible stuff in every way; I have never understood why people get romantic about it, so when I realised I could free myself from it by using digital capture, it was a joy. The result was that my archive of tens of thousands of negatives and transparencies was filed away in metal cabinets which I lugged around whenever I moved. But, I don't see that I moved "back" to the "long form" as you put it, rather, I think I moved forward to another way of producing my art. Photography has always followed technology; there is no such thing as "traditional" photography, and what I am doing now is moving forward. I have a background in printmaking and have always liked to produce prints. I like the idea that an image can also be an object, and my artwork is best seen in person, in physical space.



Salmon



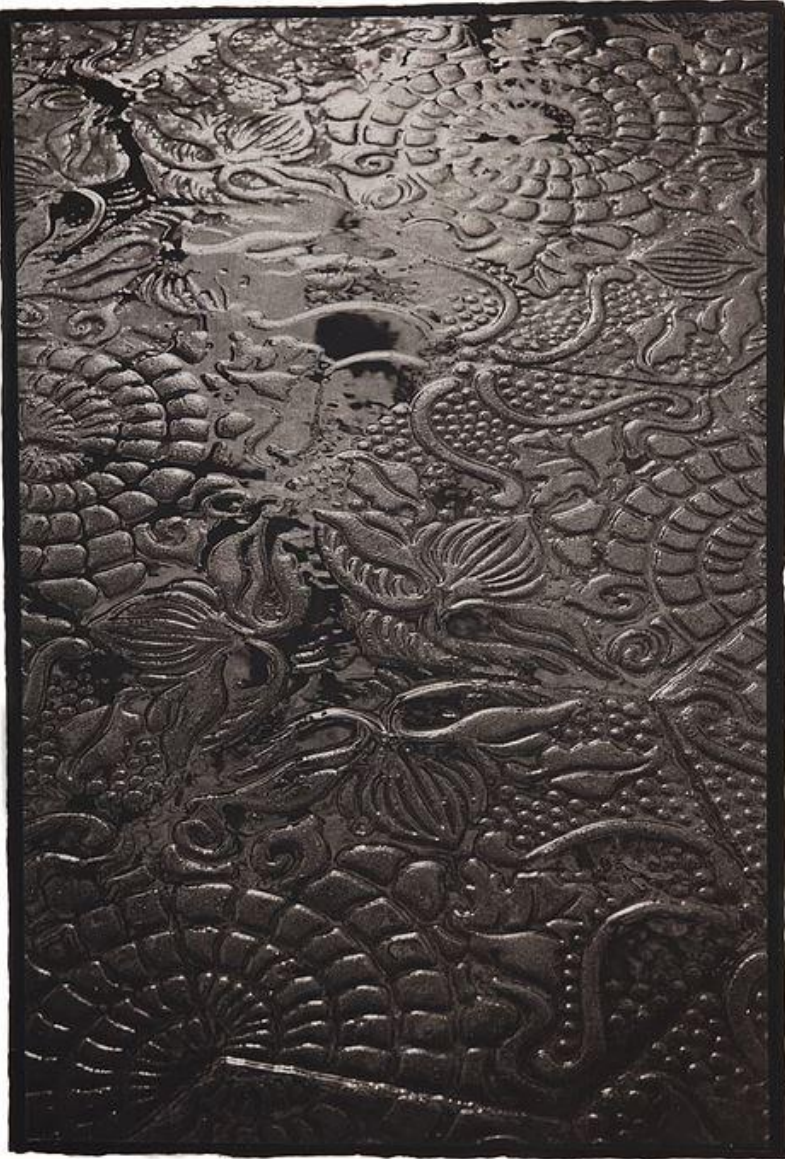
Sophie

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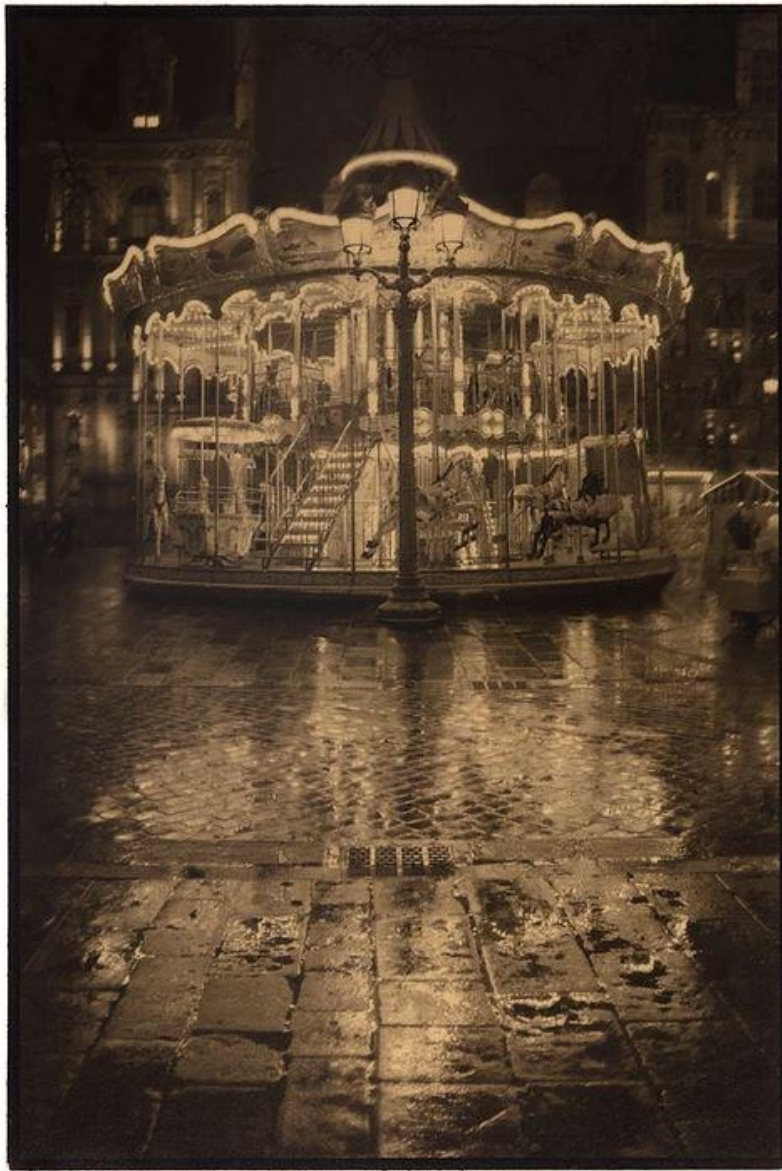
Dragonfly

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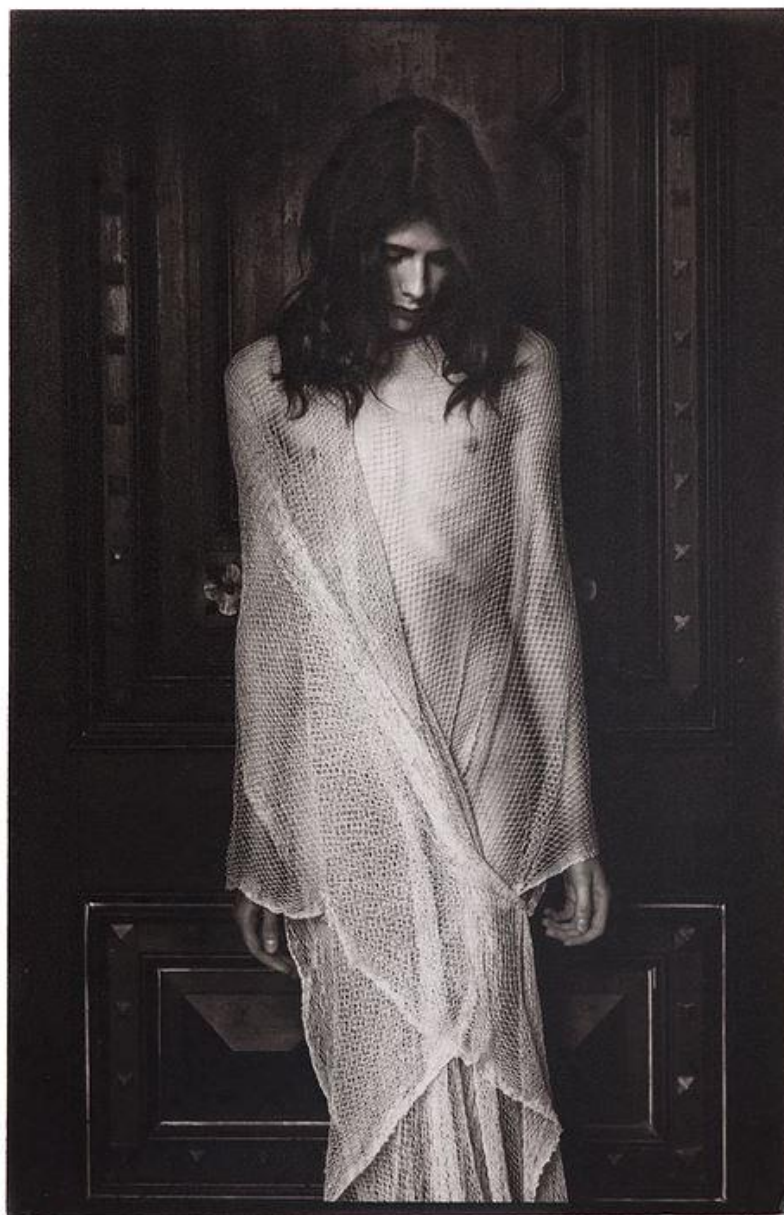
Barcelona

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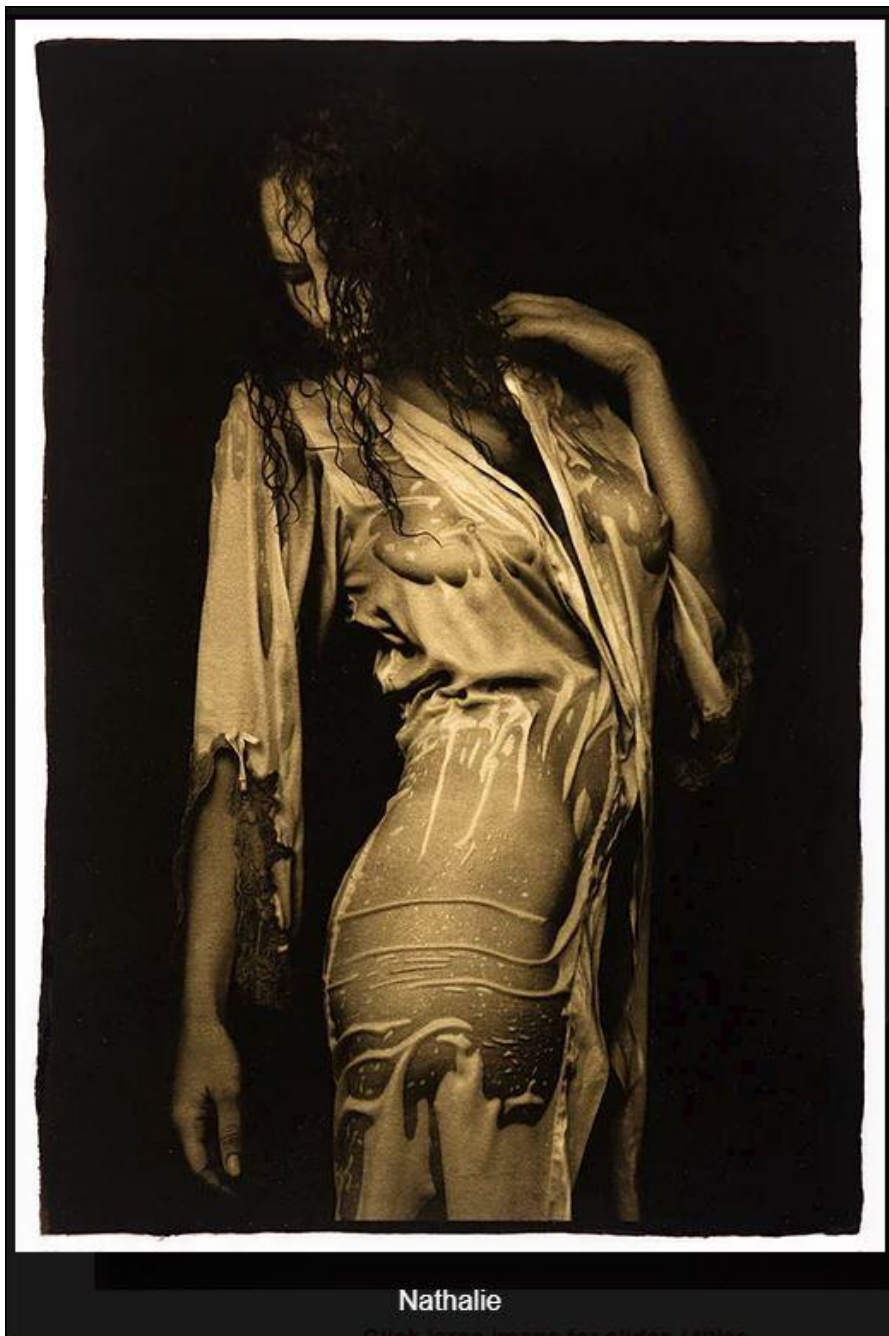


Carrousel

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Nikita

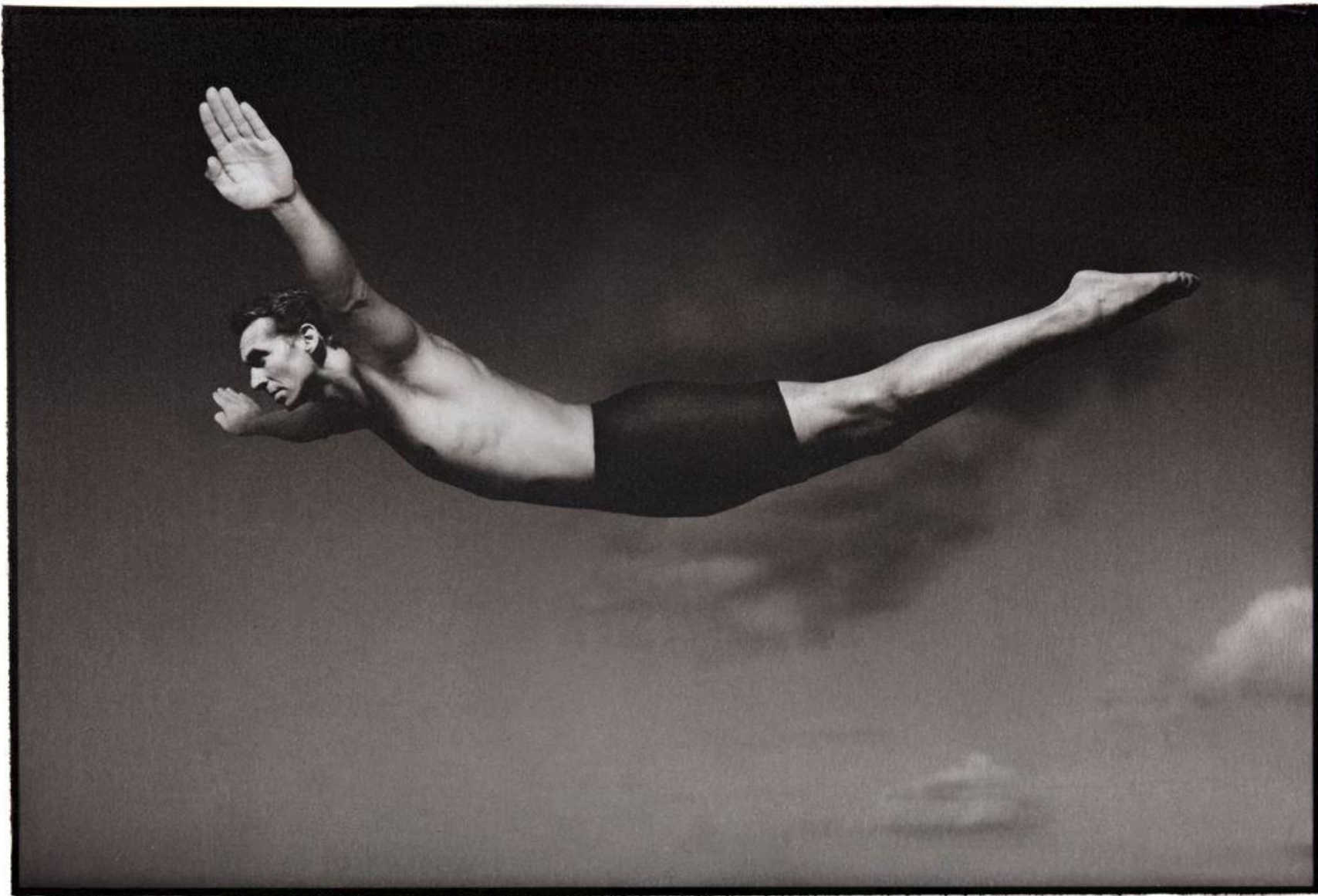


Nathalie



Shower

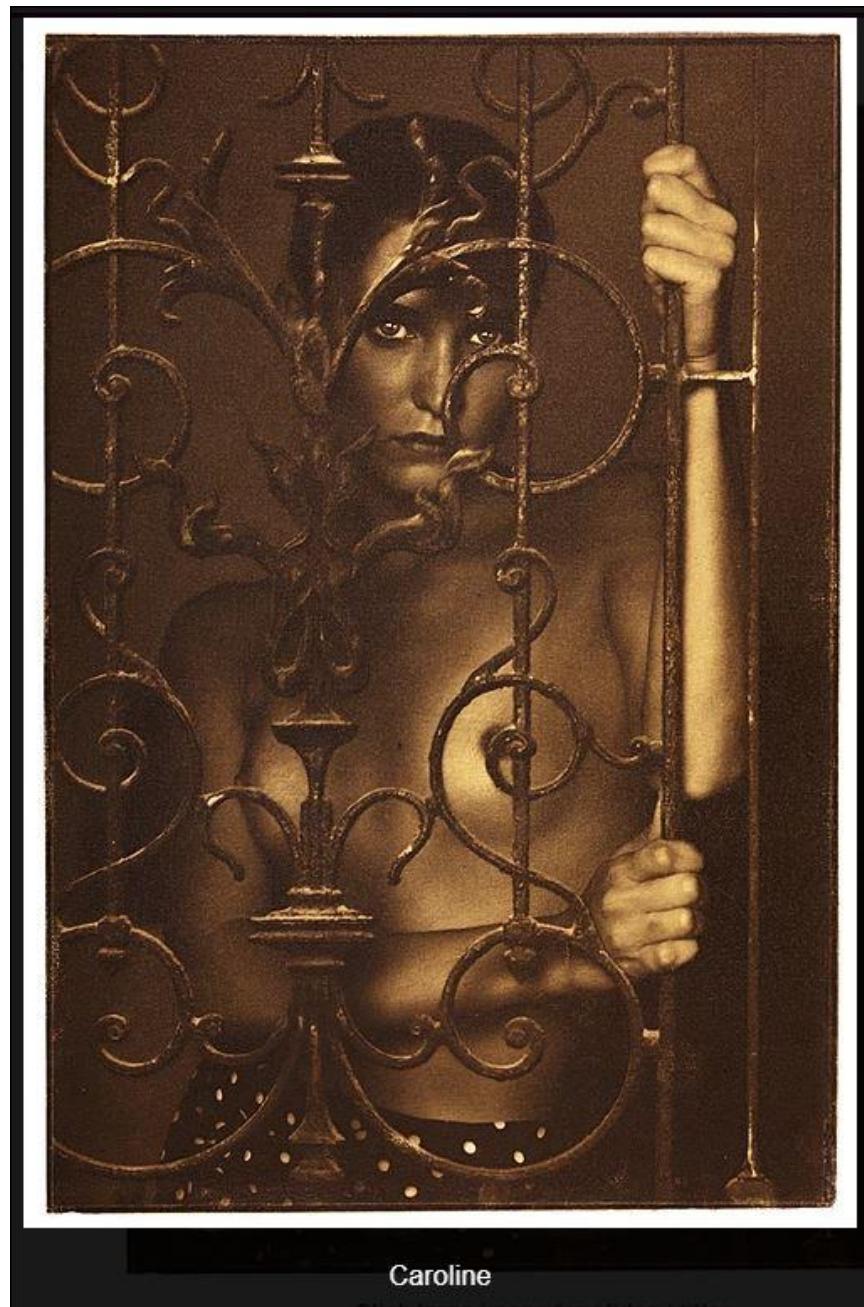
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Diver



Swimmer



Caroline

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Some photographers work from a pre-visualized plan, others may be quite random, relying on happy accident. Talk about your method, the evolution of a piece.

I don't have any kind of preset. I capture images and don't look at them for months. I like to work with a camera, but I don't enjoy the rest very much. If it wasn't for Nathalie, my partner and subject of one of the images in this portfolio, and her organising and assisting me, I would have produced much less work over the last fifteen years. Images evolve over time; it's a relatively big decision to make a print, especially a gum print as they can take days to produce. I don't like repetition so I try not to make "another of the same but different." Some would call that a style, but I think it was Picasso who said, "It's just like making cakes." Once, an editor in Paris told me I had no direction. She liked an image of a carousel I showed her. I asked her if I would be a better photographer if I went round Paris photographing more carousels.

She said, "Yes."

I left.

Your nudes are extraordinary, intimate, sensual, and creative. Do you have advice for others regarding working with a model?

Fall in love for the day. Look without a camera in your hand. Take your time. Talk to your model like you would to a close friend. Try not to be nervous. Make them laugh if you can. Above all don't be precious about your pictures; nobody dies if you get it wrong. Remember the process is more important than the product. Show your work and accept criticism.

A photography teacher imparts technique but also educates students' "critical eye." How do you teach? Is there an overarching message (or messages) you stress?

I used to make my photo students take drawing classes. Drawing is the basis of all the visual arts, in my opinion. When you draw, you are obliged to look at your subject for a very long time. My main

message is that a photograph is an object that you make, you don't "take it." If you agree that you "make it", then you are responsible for every aspect of it. Most of photography these days is activity based, which is fine and fun, but if you are asked to go into a studio and photograph a car or are asked by a magazine to photograph a person or a product, then you have to have a much more disciplined approach.

Idols, mentors, or other influences? Positive or negative?

I think you can always learn something by talking to other image makers. I think every artist or designer I have met has taught me something. The references in Art are huge, not to mention the vast resource that exists in advertising, film, illustration, etc. Photography relies on so many other disciplines: Architecture, Fashion, Dance, Sport, the list goes on. Even so called "abstract" photographers have to photograph something. I have huge admiration for the pioneers of photography; it was so hard for them. It makes me smile when I see the pictures of people standing next to their large format cameras as if there is any comparison. I am pretty sure if Ansel Adams had got his hands on a 100 megapixel Hasselblad, things might have been different.

What's next? Are there plans for an exhibit, book, or project on the horizon?

At the beginning of last year, I had a solo show in Barcelona, 75 artworks. I have been working on a book project and a catalogue for a major jewellery company. I am now going back into my archive, both digital and analogue, to try and organize it, no fun. My project now is try and commercialise my work. I am in the wrong part of the world to sell photography, in a 13th-century village in Catalonia, Spain, isolated, out of contact with any university or arts-interest community. But, I am not too concerned at the moment. I hope to do more gum and lith printing and produce some bigger platinum/palladium on vellum and, above all, make some new images.

Where can we see more of your work?

See my website at www.iansanderson.com for portfolios in platinum/palladium, gum bichromate, lith, and silver gelatin. Also, click the images below to hit video links: "Picture of Karina," which shows step-by-step how I make a gum bichromate print (over two days), and "Hand Made Prints," which documents a gallery show of my work in Barcelona.



(Click image to play video)



(Click image to play video)



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Lee Rogers, Art Director
Support from the SEALS Foundation

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